imply at once concern and accusation" (183). Likewise, the juxtaposition of priestly concern for his flesh-and-blood contemporaries and prophetic accusation against systems that dehumanize us all is the spark that fires so many of Merton's forays as an essayist. What breaks through the fire is a message as direct as it is difficult: "The task of the Christian is to make the thought of peace once again seriously possible" (129).

Patrick O'Connell concludes his introduction by confessing his poignant hope that many years from now his grandchildren "may experience something of the same enjoyment, fascination, and intellectual and spiritual nourishment in these essays that their grandfather has found over the past four decades since he first encountered Thomas Merton" (xviii). Every reader who shares in that hope, as I do, owes a debt of thanks to O'Connell and Orbis Books for this stellar volume. If my students are any indication, once bitten by Merton, the next generation will keep coming back, even if they have difficulty naming precisely why. Perhaps what keeps me coming back is the way Merton gently draws my gaze back to Christ, and through him, beyond all human speech and all structures toward "that silence in which alone Being speaks to us in all its simplicity" (183). To first behold and then to grow in friendship with Christ is to ignite the "spark" which is my true self and at once "the flash of the Absolute recognizing itself in me" (438).

Christopher Pramuk

MERTON, Thomas, *Seeing the World in a Grain of Sand: Thomas Merton on Poetry* (Introduction by Michael W. Higgins + 16 Lectures: 7 CDs); *"God Speaks to Each of Us": The Poetry and Letters of Rainer Maria Rilke* (Introduction by Michael W. Higgins + 11 Lectures: 5 CDs); *Thomas Merton on William Faulkner and Classical Literature* (Introduction by Michael W. Higgins + 10 Lectures: 5 CDs); *"All the Living and the Dead": The Literature of James Joyce* (Introduction by Michael W. Higgins + 4 Lectures: 3 CDs); *Prayer and Growth in Christian Life* (Introduction by Fr. Anthony Ciorra + 13 Segments: 6 CDs); *"Man to Man": A Message of Contemplatives to the World (1967)* (Introduction by Fr. Anthony Ciorra + 10 Segments: 3 CDs); *Living Contemplatively: Address to the Carmelite Sisters of Savannah (1967)* (Introduction by Fr. Anthony Ciorra + 8 Segments: 4 CDs); *The Search for Wholeness* (3 Lectures: 2 CDs) (Rockville, MD: Now You Know Media, 2013).

Of the eight sets of recordings issued in 2013 by Now You Know Media in their continuing project of making Thomas Merton's conferences and other oral materials available commercially, four are focused on literary

topics while three more are comprised of tapes made for various women's religious communities; only the shortest set, *The Search for Wholeness*, is more heterogeneous in content, though it fortuitously has certain connections with each of these other groupings.

In his efforts to provide his novices some exposure to the humanities as a necessary foundation and context for more explicitly theological and spiritual development, during the final year of his decade as novice master at the Abbey of Gethsemani Merton gave a series of conferences on art and literature, beginning with an overview of the meaning of beauty in art in August 1964,[1] then moving on to a discussion of Celtic art in September, followed by an extensive consideration of poetry from the end of October 1964 through May 1965, and concluding with nine conferences on Greek tragedy and related topics that continued from early June through August 19, the day before he resigned as novice master and moved permanently into his hermitage. *"Seeing the World in a Grain of Sand"* includes most of the conferences on poetry, which Merton considered particularly important for aspiring monks who would be chanting the psalms in choir for the rest of their lives and therefore needed to develop a solid knowledge of and sensitivity to imaginative and figurative language. In the sixteen conferences included in the set, Merton moves from considering the difference between visual and verbal art forms, to the different types of poetry, with particular focus on the lyric, to pointing out the way various figures of speech function, particularly metaphor and symbol, to contrasting classic and romantic approaches to literature and to life. His emphasis throughout is on the power of poetry to convey deep human experience, particularly deep spiritual experience, and he draws on a wide range of poets, including John Donne, George Herbert, Edmund Waller, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, Gerard Manley Hopkins and W. H. Auden, among others, to exemplify his main points. One February conference on Blake is missing, presumably by accident, along with three conferences on T. S. Eliot from almost the end of the sequence, though in the latter case one may assume the intention is to issue them as a separate group at a later date. Merton scholar Michael Higgins provides an informative and engaging introduction to the set, emphasizing Merton's own position as a prolific and "not insignificant poet in his own right," his integration of the spiritual and the literary in his own life and in these presentations, the gestation of his important essay "Symbolism: Communication or Communion?"[2] and the

1. Two of these initial conferences on beauty dating from August 1964 are including in the CD set *Finding True Meaning and Beauty* (Rockville, MD: Now You Know Media, 2012).

2. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, ed. Naomi Burton Stone and Brother Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1979) 54-79; subsequent references will be cited

attractive, often humorous presentation both of concepts and of examples. Higgins' emphasis on the importance of William Blake for Merton (the subject of his own book *Heretic Blood*[3]), while helpful, gives a somewhat unrepresentative perspective on the contents of the conferences as a whole, in which Blake is a less dominant figure than he is in this introduction, where he is the only poet discussed in any detail.

After moving to the hermitage Merton continued to give weekly conferences on Sunday afternoons, primarily to novices but open to the entire monastic community, on various topics that were of current interest to him and that he considered relevant to his audience. In each of the remaining three years of his life he spent some time speaking about important literary figures. Between mid-November 1965 and mid-March 1966 he focused on the poetry and letters of Rainer Maria Rilke, the great German poet of the early twentieth century, conferences now issued as *"God Speaks to Each of Us."* In his fine introduction Michael Higgins specifies the time span of the conferences (which hadn't been done with the previous set) and relates them to Merton's significant comments on the poet in his journals and letters during the same period. He stresses Merton's "abiding affection" for the anguished, "post-Catholic" Rilke, whose attraction to solitude was both compelling and somewhat problematic for Merton; he highlights the importance that Merton will put on Rilke's notion of "inseeing," alerts the listener to Merton's extended discussions of "The Panther" and the *Duino Elegies*, and emphasizes the centrality of Rilke's idiosyncratic quest for God as the central thread both of the poet's own work and of Merton's discussion. He does not mention the fact that Rilke actually disappears almost completely from view during the four conferences from December 12 through January 2 which are nevertheless included in this set. Merton himself begins by relating these presentations to his earlier poetry conferences, reiterating that the inability to respond to poetic experience increases the risk of missing religious experience as well, since both are holistic and involve the complete person. He notes that Rilke's emphasis on interiority is important for monks, especially as it is not a dualistic rejection of the outer world but a penetration of the depths of concrete reality. He first presents the more accessible poems of Rilke's mid-career, including "The Carousel," "The Panther" and "The Unicorn." In later conferences he will go back to the early period of Rilke's *Book of Hours*, where his search for the divine is presented in the persona of a Russian monk (a way of escaping the

---

as "*L&L*" parenthetically in the text.

3. Michael W. Higgins, *Heretic Blood: The Spiritual Geography of Thomas Merton* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998).

"neurotic" Catholicism of his pious mother), and then come to consider the final maturity represented by the *Sonnets to Orpheus* and the *Duino Elegies*, especially the first, which is discussed in detail, concluding the series with a look at the *Letters to a Young Poet*, with their emphasis on the creative value of human love. (Merton's incidental comments on eros here, including a rather dismissive remark about those who regard their romantic involvements as profoundly spiritual experiences, are particularly interesting in that they are made immediately before his momentous trip to the Louisville hospital that would result in his brief but intense relationship with M., which he certainly considered at the time to be deeply spiritual.) During Advent and immediately after, Merton largely leaves Rilke aside to focus on the positive meaning of asceticism as a liberating discipline and to consider the theme of freedom in the Stoics and in the contemporary existentialists Sartre and Marcel, though he does draw from a Rilke letter on the religiousness of the Russian peasantry on December 19 and looks at his poem "The Donor" at the conclusion of his December 26 conference. The opening reference on February 6 to Rilke's ideas on death and on his own death as having already been discussed indicates that at least one conference from January is missing, either not recorded or lost – taping during the hermitage years, when the conferences were given in the chapter room, was apparently somewhat less efficient than it was when Merton was novice master.

The title of the set of conferences entitled *William Faulkner and Classical Literature* is somewhat misleading in its suggestion that the focus is on Faulkner's relationship to or reliance on classical literature; at very least the order should be reversed, since the series begins with four conferences (October 23 through November 27, 1966) on the classical consciousness, first as contrasted with contemporary anti-poetry (particularly Merton's own, some of which he reads), then as exemplifying a well-ordered world and worldview, with a strong sense of balance and coordination, in harmony with a contemplative consciousness and capable of a transcendent intellectual joy. The topic is considered in relation to John Milton, whom Merton was reading extensively at the time, then in connection to the essay "What Is a Classic?" by T. S. Eliot, who refused to regard Milton as a classic poet, and finally as exemplified in a contemporary poem by a writer from nearby Lexington. Only in the final six conferences of the series, dating from January through mid-March of 1967, is Faulkner the focus. The proper order of the first two of these conferences has apparently been reversed, as Merton mentions in the one presented first here that he had previously discussed Faulkner's story "The Bear," the focus of what is now the following conference, though it is

evident once again that at least one presentation is missing, as he begins this second session by saying he will now finish talking about "The Bear," so it is possible, though less likely, that he had begun analyzing the story in a missing conference, temporarily left it in the next conference in the present order, and then returned to finish it the following week. In any case, he presents Faulkner as exemplifying a classical humanism with biblical and Christian overtones, as articulated in his affirmation of the "old verities and truths of the heart" in his Nobel acceptance speech and exemplified by his depiction of hubris, arrogance and contempt for the rest of humanity, in the story "An Error in Chemistry." "The Bear" is seen as presenting a pattern of spiritual formation rooted in a classical picture of life, learning to live in harmony with the real order present in creation (rather than the more romantic approach of making one's own identity). The story, Merton concludes, is better than the Trappist *Spiritual Directory* or a shelf of books on mystical theology in developing a true sense both of asceticism, relinquishing unjust possessions, and of a natural contemplation growing into wisdom by participating in the patterns of the created world. The final four Faulkner conferences form two pairs. The first focuses on the double structure of the novel *The Wild Palms*, with its intertwined juxtaposition of the mythic "Old Man," in which a nameless convict rescues a pregnant woman who give birth in the middle of the flooded Mississippi, and the starkly realistic "The Wild Palms," in which a botched abortion demanded by the woman of her doctor lover leads to her death and his incarceration in the same prison as the old convict. The second pair provides an overview of Faulkner's novel *The Sound and the Fury*, then turns in detail to the final scene of the Easter sermon in the Negro church where the black cook Dilsey, "one of Faulkner's saints," experiences the *kairos*, the time of salvation, in the midst of the dissolution of order in the Compson family for whom she works. (These four conferences were transcribed, with considerable revision that even included borrowing a sentence from one of the other conferences, and published first in *Katallagete* and then in an appendix to Merton's *Literary Essays*.[4]) Once again Michael Higgins provides an insightful introduction, emphasizing Faulkner's, and Merton's, preference for the sapiential dimension over the scientific and the novelist's transcending of his regionalism and his "gothic" sensibility to achieve a classical perspective. He draws on

4. Thomas Merton, *The Literary Essays of Thomas Merton*, ed. Patrick Hart, OCSO (New York: New Directions, 1981) 495-536; subsequent references will be cited as "*LE*" parenthetically in the text. A comparison of oral and printed versions reveals that the texts were quite freely edited and modified, including at one point the transposition of a sentence from the conference on "The Bear."

Merton's essay "Baptism in the Forest" (*LE* 92-116) and his review-article "Faulkner and His Critics" (*LE* 117-23) to highlight Faulkner's mythic rather than sociological perspective and to note the centrality of the fall and redemption theme in his work, but makes no mention of the fact that four of the six conferences are available in printed form. He also omits any reference to the four initial, non-Faulkner conferences, suggesting that the introduction was recorded before an editorial decision was made to incorporate these presentations into the set.

The final set of literary conferences includes only four talks, on James Joyce, one of Merton's earliest and most lasting enthusiasms, as Michael Higgins points out in his introduction to this series; they were presented in July and August 1968, not long before Merton left Gethsemani on September 11 for the West Coast, Alaska and finally Asia. The talks coincided with Merton's work on a review-essay of recent books on Joyce for *The Sewanee Review* ("News of the Joyce Industry" [*LE* 12-22], completed on July 30[5]). Higgins credits Joyce with influencing Merton by his style and literary consciousness, by his aesthetic grounded in Thomistic philosophy and by his rebellious critique of a desiccated conventional Catholicism. Merton once again begins his discussion by emphasizing that significant literature is not a diversion but a revelation of human experience in its depth and diversity, and points to Joyce's *Ulysses* as at once a mythic revisioning of the *Odyssey*, a comic work of genius, and a devastating exposure of both Irish parochialism in particular and the traditions of Western culture in general, about to collapse even as nominal assent is still given to values that are no longer lived out. In the second conference he focuses on the long final story in *Dubliners*, "The Dead," in which a commonplace Christmas party and its meandering conversations (including the characters' wildly inaccurate comments about Trappist monasticism) eventually culminate in the main character's discovery of an incident in his wife's early life that puts his own relationship with her in an entirely different perspective. In the third conference[6] Merton considers Joyce's aesthetic ideas as well as the not quite identical ones of his fictional alter ego Stephen Dedalus, stressing the classicism of Joyce as a quasi-contemplative acceptance of actual reality as opposed to a more romantic, "kinetic" focus on restless desire, and critiques what he sees as an overly romantic reading of "The Dead" that would claim that Gabriel Conroy's more quotidian love for his wife is to be regarded as inferior in

5. Thomas Merton, *The Other Side of the Mountain: The End of the Journey. Journals, vol. 7: 1967-1968*, ed. Patrick Hart (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998) 148; subsequent references will be cited as "*OSM*" parenthetically in the text.

6. Transcribed and included in the present volume.

comparison with that of his wife Greta's young devotee Michael Furey, who "died for love" of her as a teenager. After a long introductory "aside" on the future of monasticism at the outset of the final conference, Merton focuses on the notion of "epiphany" in Joyce, the sudden revelation of the true significance of ordinary everyday events, using as an example the brief story "Araby" from *Dubliners*, where a young boy's unrealistic expectations prompted by the exotic name of a church bazaar give way to the disillusion of a chastened realism, likened at the end, in what is one of Merton's final recorded conferences, to a basic spiritual insight fundamental to monastic asceticism, the recognition of Ecclesiastes: "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

The second group of recordings is not made up of conferences at all; they are the products of a virtually unknown "tape ministry" that Merton developed for various communities of religious women during 1967. In a July 31, 1967 letter to Franciscan Sister Elaine M. Bane, who had founded a contemplative "retiro" at her convent in Allegany, New York, across the road from St. Bonaventure College, Merton writes:

> It is absolutely essential for contemplative communities to get into some kind of dialogue with one another about their problems. One of the things I can and will do: I can make tapes and circulate them. I do not unfortunately have time to do a great deal of this, but I might make one for you if you like. To make this easier for me, why don't you send me some questions and topics. . . . Sister Luke of the Loretto Motherhouse has some tapes I made for her novices and one for the Superiors of her congregation, and she might be willing to lend or sent you copies of these. . . . Their problems may be different from yours but the tapes might be useful for sisters from active communities on retreat there. I think a tape library would be a good thing for the retiro. But you would need tapes fitted for your special needs.[7]

The group of recordings entitled *Prayer and Growth in Christian Life* comprises three distinct sets of these taped reflections. The first three of the twelve bands consist in Merton's initial attempt to produce a tape for a non-Gethsemani audience, the novices at the nearby Loretto motherhouse where his friend Sr. Mary Luke Tobin was superior. Made in the abbey library over a few days of January 1967,[8] it includes a talk by Merton on

7. Thomas Merton, *The School of Charity: Letters on Religious Renewal and Spiritual Direction*, ed. Patrick Hart (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1990) 339-40; subsequent references will be cited as "*SC*" parenthetically in the text.

8. These recordings are erroneously dated 7/28/1967 on the discs, the day immediately preceding the recording of the first of the following group of taped reflections.

prayer as response to God and the awakening and unbinding of the inner self, followed by his answers to various questions asked by the young sisters, about the role of the emotions in prayer, the question of human goodness in an evil world, the meaning of consecrated virginity, the Vietnam War, struggles in community life, the tension between institutional and more charismatic, prophetic dimensions of the Church and other issues.[9] The following eight tracks (the divisions here and elsewhere in these recordings are determined by the producer, sometimes but not always corresponding to Merton's pausing the tape to think more or to do some housekeeping chores at the hermitage, where he now has a recorder for his own use) were made in late July and early August 1967 in response to the draft document of the order's revised rule, "I Am the Way," composed by Sr. Jane Marie Richardson,[10] which was to be considered by the Sisters of Loretto General Chapter. He provides a strongly positive evaluation of the document, emphasizing the importance of revisioning a "dedicated" religious community in terms of "unceasing conversion," and then goes on to fill the rest of the two sides of the tape with reflections on closely or not-so-closely related topics, including the dimension of "ecstasy" in the spiritual life, privileges and obligations of religious, Christian nonviolence, Camus on the Death Penalty,[11] Religious Freedom, and a reading of extensive excerpts from his essay on education, "Learning to Live" (*L&L* 3-14).[12] The two final tracks, unsegmented hour-long recordings, are in fact not addressed to the Loretto nuns at all but were made, as offered, on a "cold fall morning" for Sr. Elaine's community in Allegany, and address various issues of cloistered religious life, including problematic aspects of the term "contemplative," tensions between separation from and openness to the world, the traditional paradigm of Martha and Mary as representatives of active and contemplative life, the relationship between freedom and penance in religious life, and the primacy of love and faith in Christian and particularly in religious life. Fr. Anthony Ciorra's introduction to the set provides some insightful commentary on

9. The first part of this material had previously been included in the CD series *Thomas Merton on Contemplation* (Rockville, MD: Now You Know Media, 2012).

10. See "Life through the Lens of Inner and Outer Freedom: An Interview with Jane Marie Richardson, SL," conducted by George A. Kilcourse, *The Merton Annual* 13 (2000) 129 for details.

11. This section of the recording has been transcribed and published: Thomas Merton, "Camus, Catholicism and the Death Penalty," introduced and transcribed by Mark C. Meade, *The Merton Seasonal* 38.3 (Fall 2103) 12-15.

12. One variant found in the recording is almost certainly authorial; where the printed text reads "It is learning that the spark . . . can never be subject to control or to enlightenment . . ." (10), Merton's reading text reads: ". . . to control or to enticement . . ."

the various issues discussed on the tapes and on Merton's own writings about solitude, but gives virtually no information on the occasions, dates or audiences of the recordings, noting only that they were made "for a group of sisters," so the listener is left with only the vaguest realization, inferred from Merton's own passing comments, of the circumstances that gave rise to these three distinct recording sessions.

The next set, entitled *"Man to Man": A Message of Contemplatives to the World*,[13] was recorded between August 21, 1967 and the end of that month, and it eventually becomes clear that it is also addressed to the Allegany Franciscans (and in fact precedes the tape made for them that is found on the previous set). It begins with a reading of the "Letter on the Contemplative Life" (with numerous divergences from the printed text[14]) that Merton had quickly written in response to a request coming from Pope Paul VI by way Dom Francis Decroix, abbot of a Cistercian monastery near Rome, for a message of contemplatives to the world, which was to be issued in conjunction with the Synod of Bishops meeting in October 1967. This is followed the next day by a recording of a follow-up letter sent to the same abbot (*HGL* 158-59) to supplement what Merton considered to be some inadequacies of his hastily composed statement of the previous day, already put in the mail. He then provides some informal reflections on what he calls the "ins and outs of problems" in the whole idea of contemplatives presenting a message to the world when contemplative institutions find themselves in a kind of identity crisis in relation to the direction their renewal needs to take in the wake of the Second Vatican Council's call for recovery of the original charism of a religious order, and the need for patience and a willingness to live with the "provisional" rather than to attempt to arrive at definitive answers to issues of renewal prematurely. He goes on to discuss the salutary role of the imagination in prayer, and the importance of training the imagination through response to nature and the arts, and then comments on sections of the English Benedictine Sebastian Moore's recent book *God Is a New Language*, specifically sections on religious alienation and the tendency to mis-categorize some problems of religious as moral or

13. The main title is a slightly inaccurate rendition of that given to the first published text of "A Letter on the Contemplative Life": Thomas Merton, "As Man to Man," *Cistercian Studies* 4 (1969) 90-94.

14. Thomas Merton, *The Monastic Journey*, ed. Brother Patrick Hart (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews & McMeel, 1977) 169-73; subsequent references will be cited as "*MJ*" parenthetically in the text. It is also found in Thomas Merton, *The Hidden Ground of Love: Letters on Religious Experience and Social Concerns*, ed. William H. Shannon (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985) 154-59; subsequent references will be cited as "*HGL*" parenthetically in the text.

spiritual which may in fact be natural psychological struggles that should not be treated as sins or moral failings. After about a week's silence, due to a bout of the flu, Merton completes the tape by informing the sisters that in the meanwhile he had heard from the monks in Rome that he was expected not simply to contribute some thoughts about the "message of contemplatives," as he had assumed, but to provide the principal draft of the message, which would then be reworked by others there, so when he had sufficiently recovered he had done so, and reads a section of this new document to the sisters to bring the tape to a close.[15] Fr. Ciorra in his introduction provides some helpful background on the initial "Letter on the Contemplative Life" in particular and on Merton's writings on contemplation in general, as well as on the conciliar context in which the letter was written, specifically the themes of the universal call to holiness, the relation of church and world, and the call to renewal of religious life. But along with making no attempt to identify the tape's specific audience, he makes no mention either of Merton's August 22 follow-up letter to Abbot Decroix, nor, more importantly, of the new draft that he composed at the end of the month. He also mistakenly attributes the document entitled "Contemplatives and the Crisis of Faith" (*MJ* 174-78), the final version of the "Message," jointly composed by the Cistercian André Louf, the Carthusian J.-B. Porion and Merton (through his contribution of the late August draft), to the Synod of Bishops, when in fact it had been submitted to the bishops rather than written by them.

The third of these sets, *Living Contemplatively*, was sent to the Carmelite monastery in Savannah, Georgia, as the subtitle indicates. The reason Merton makes a tape for this community is that its prioress was his friend Mother Angela Collins, formerly superior of the Carmel in Louisville, to whom he had written on June 14, 1967: "I hope by now you have the tape I made; I asked the nuns of Loretto to make a copy and send it on to you. On the other hand I am sure it is not quite what you wanted. But at least it is something. If I get a chance, I will try to do something more useful. Also the Carmel in Louisville copied another talk that I did for them, and that might be more up your alley. . . . So I hope those two tapes will at least be a sign of life and some indication that I want to help insofar as I can" (*SC* 334). Three months later he sends the community their own tape, providing the dates at the beginning of each

15. For mention of this text, which has never been published, see Thomas Merton, *Learning to Love: Exploring Solitude and Freedom. Journals, vol. 6: 1966-1967*, ed. Christine M. Bochen (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997) 282 [8/28/1967 – probably an error for 8/29]; subsequent references will be cited as "*LL*" parenthetically in the text. See also Merton's August 29, 1967 letter to Filiberto Guala, OCSO (*SC* 344-45).

of the successive segments of the recordings over five days from September 13 through 17, 1967. The first day considers the ambiguities of the term "contemplative" with its associations with the highly aristocratic and highly intellectual pagan Greek tradition, but notes that an alternative term is difficult to find; he emphasizes that the basic reality of the Christian contemplative life, of all Christian life, is participation in the paschal mystery, dying to self and to illusion and rising with Christ to new, full, authentic life in union with God. The following day, the Feast of the Holy Cross, he emphasizes the present experience of risen life as well as the development of a "contemplative memory" that does not dwell on past injuries or failings, or on complacent recollections, but is mindful of the personal and communal history of God's salvific actions, and of the sacramental re-presentation of these salvific events here and now (the anamnesis of the liturgy). He begins a discussion of religious poverty and the danger of settling for a mere juridical understanding of the vow, a topic he picks up the following day in considering the problematic aspects of considering oneself "poor" in a world where so many are living in abject destitution, claiming no solution to this dilemma of a commitment to genuine poverty that is not largely formalistic, yet counseling a continued engagement with the question even without prospect of a definitive answer. He then reads to them the Easter Homily he had composed for Argus Communications, originally intended to be issued as a tape (to be read by someone else) but eventually published in a small, illustrated booklet long after Merton's death.[16] (Fr. Ciorra, in an otherwise helpful introduction highlighting as Merton's key themes in the recording the attitude toward culture, the relation of poverty to culture and the centrality of the resurrection, mistakenly thinks that the sermon was written for one of the other monks to read during a Mass in the abbey church.[17]) September 16 is largely devoted to the question of education in contemplative communities, with Merton suggesting that the three levels of basic humanities, philosophy and religion, particularly scripture but also patristic and medieval spiritual masters and accessible contemporary theological and spiritual writers, should be a part of any integrated instruction of new members of a community and part of an ongoing educational process for all religious. Finally on September 17 Merton devotes the last few minutes left on the tape to a consideration of the solitary life as an authentic contemplative vocation, and of solitude as an essential element

16. Thomas Merton, *He Is Risen* (Niles, IL: Argus, 1975); this section of the tape was previously included in the CD set *Thomas Merton's Great Sermons* (Rockville, MD: Now You Know Media, 2012).

17. See *LL* 291 (9/14/1967) for accurate details.

for all contemplatives, closing by reminding his listeners that his own hermitage is dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and noting that the first Mass he celebrated there took place on her feast day.

It is worth mentioning that these recordings for women's communities not only bear a certain resemblance in focus and subject matter to the two retreats Merton organized for contemplative prioresses in December 1967 and May 1968,[18] but in fact were directly connected to their being held. It was at the suggestion of Sr. Elaine Bane that the original gathering was held; as Merton lists the attendees in his journal on the first day of that retreat, he writes: "First of all Sr. Elaine Michael [Bane] from the OSF at Allegany. Intelligence, earnestness response – someone you enjoy working with (we organized this together)" (*OSM* 20). As for the second retreat, due to a miscommunication Mother Angela had not been invited to the December gathering, so Merton decided to direct a second one the following spring with a smaller group including her and other Carmelite prioresses taking part.[19] And of course Sr. Luke was a participant in both retreats, as was Sr. Jane Marie Richardson, who later edited the published version of the conferences. So ministry of the spoken word developed for Merton into ministry of presence, dialogue and mutual encouragement.

The Search for Wholeness, the one set of 2013 recordings that belongs to neither group, includes only three conferences, with no introduction. The first two are a pair, entitled "Greek Tragedy and Chinese Thought," Parts I and II, from June 3 and 10, 1965, which actually belong to the final phase of Merton's art and literature series. In fact they focus almost entirely on Chinese Thought rather than on Greek Tragedy, the connection being that both exemplify the turn toward a recognition of the individual person with an individual destiny that characterized the thought of sixth and fifth centuries B.C. (Karl Jaspers' "axial" period) in many different cultures (including that of Israel). Merton focuses on the Confucian reinterpretation of the "superior man" not as a figure of high social status but as a fully developed, humane person characterized by the fourfold qualities of *jen* (empathic love), *yi* (justice or righteousness), *li* (a "liturgical" connection to the cosmos) and *chi* (wisdom that interiorizes these values).[20]

18. These conferences have previously been issued on CD as *Solitude and Togetherness* and *The Prophet's Freedom* (Rockville, MD: Now You Know Media, 2012) and were transcribed and edited as Thomas Merton, *The Springs of Contemplation: A Retreat at the Abbey of Gethsemani*, ed. Jane Marie Richardson, SL (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1992).

19. See Merton's December 5 and December 26, 1967 and January 22, 1968 letters to Mother Angela (*SC* 354-55, 358-59, 363-64) and February 16, 1968 letter to Sr. Elaine (*SC* 366) for details.

20. Much the same material is included in Merton's Introduction to *The Way of*

He likens this humanistic vision to a monastic outlook, particularly that of the Black Benedictines, and in his second conference presents as his "basic thesis" the suggestion that the natural patterns found in such philosophies are a kind of preparation for the gospel and are fulfilled in Christ, in whom the same fourfold structure can be discerned on a higher plane, in which Christ as wisdom, justification, atonement and sanctification embodies *chi*, *yi*, *jen* and *li*, respectively. He then turns to the symbol of *chung*, the ideogram that represents an arrow going to the center of a target, that represents the Confucian "doctrine of the mean" or "unwobbling pivot"; it can be analogized to the cross and seen as a reflection of the "still point of the turning world" described by T. S. Eliot, a basically contemplative Chinese perception of wholeness. These conferences are a very effective summary of central Confucian principles, but would be more effective if they were situated in their original context of the series on Greek tragedy, which also includes two additional conferences on Chinese thought. The other conference included in this set, entitled "Time and Prayer," turns out to be a presentation Merton gave at the Trappistine Abbey of the Redwoods in California as part of a three-day gathering for contemplatives in mid-October 1968,[21] just before leaving for Asia, and so has a kind of fortuitous connection with the sets of tapes Merton made for the various women's communities. He focuses on the experience of time, drawing on Cassian's teaching on constant prayer, the Renaissance consciousness of time as both cyclic and linear, Proust's explorations of the recovery of time, but above all the Biblical doctrine of "the fullness of time," the meaning of kairos as the time of salvation and of decision, and once again turns to *The Sound and the Fury* to explore the differences between secular and sacred perceptions of time, a further connection with material also issued this year by Now You Know Media in their ongoing efforts to make Merton's oral presentations available in a more systematic and comprehensive way than had been previously attempted. While the planning and execution is not flawless, it represents a significant advance that merits admiration and appreciation along with anticipation of further sets that will continue to expand access to this secondary yet significant part of Thomas Merton's legacy.

Patrick F. O'Connell

Chuang Tzu (New York: New Directions, 1965) which he had written a short time before.

21. For details of this gathering, including extensive quotations from this conference, see David Steindl-Rast, "Man of Prayer," in Patrick Hart, ed., *Thomas Merton/Monk: A Monastic Tribute* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1974); enlarged edition, Cistercian Studies vol. 52 (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1983) 79-89.